

Israel, Hamas agree to ceasefire after 11 days

War brings deaths, injuries and destruction to Gaza

Fares Akram and Joseph Krauss
ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM – Israel and Hamas agreed to a cease-fire Thursday, halting a bruising 11-day war that caused widespread destruction in the Gaza Strip, brought life in much of Israel to a standstill and left more than 200 people dead.

At 2 a.m. local time, just as the cease-fire took effect, frenzied life returned to the streets of Gaza. People went out of their homes, some shouting “Allahu Akbar” or whistling from balconies. Many fired in the air, celebrating the truce.

Like the three previous wars between the bitter enemies, the latest round of fighting ended inconclusively. Israel claimed to inflict heavy damage on Hamas, but once again was unable to halt the Islamic militant group’s nonstop rocket barrages. Almost immediately, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced angry accusations from his hard-line, right-wing base that he stopped the operation too soon.

Hamas, the Islamic militant group sworn to Israel’s destruction, also claimed victory. But it now faces the daunting challenge of rebuilding in a territory already suffering from poverty, widespread unemployment and a raging coronavirus outbreak.

Netanyahu’s office said his Security Cabinet

had unanimously accepted an Egyptian cease-fire proposal after recommendations from Israel’s military chief and other top security officials. A statement boasted of “significant achievements in the operation, some of which are unprecedented.”

It also included a veiled threat against Hamas. “The political leaders emphasized that the reality on the ground will determine the future of the campaign,” the statement said.

The fighting erupted on May 10, when Hamas militants in Gaza fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem. The barrage came after days of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Heavy-handed police tactics at the compound, built on a site holy to Muslims and Jews, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinians by Jewish settlers had inflamed tensions.

The competing claims to Jerusalem lie at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have repeatedly triggered bouts of violence in the past.

Hamas and other militant groups fired over 4,000 rockets into Israel throughout the fighting, launching the projectiles from civilian areas at Israeli cities. Dozens of projectiles flew as far north as Tel Aviv, the country’s bustling commercial and



A building is hit Thursday during an Israeli airstrike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. SAID KHATIB/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



People inspect the rubble of a destroyed residential building hit by Israeli airstrikes, in Gaza City, Thursday. ADEL HANA/AP

numbers down into fighters and civilians. Twelve people in Israel, including a 5-year-old boy and 16-year-old girl, were killed.

The United States, Israel’s closest and most important ally, initially backed what it said was Israel’s right to self-defense against indiscriminate rocket fire. But as the fighting dragged on and the death toll mounted, the Americans increasingly pressured Israel to stop the offensive.

In a rare public rift, Netanyahu on Wednesday briefly rebuffed a public call from President Joe Biden to wind things down, appearing determined to inflict maximum damage on Hamas in a war that could help save his political career.

But late Thursday, Netanyahu’s office announced the cease-fire agreement. Hamas quickly followed suit. Militants continued to launch sporadic rocket at Israel early Friday before the 2 a.m. cease-fire took effect.

In Washington, Biden hailed the cease-fire. “I believe we have a genuine opportunity to make progress, and I’m committed to working for it,” he said.

Biden said the U.S. was committed to helping Israel replenish its supply of interceptor missiles for its Iron Dome rocket-defense system and to working with the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority – not Hamas – to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Netanyahu quickly came under heavy criticism from members of his hawkish, nationalist base. Gideon Saar, a former ally who now leads a small party opposed to the prime minister, called the cease-fire “embarrassing.”

In a potentially damaging development for the Israeli leader, the Palestinian militants claimed Netanyahu had agreed to halt further Israeli actions at the Al Aqsa Mosque and to call off the planned evictions of Palestinians in the nearby Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

An Egyptian official said only that tensions in Jerusalem “will be addressed.” He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was discussing behind-the-scenes negotiations and provided no details.

Itamar Ben Gvir, head of the far-right Jewish Power party, tweeted that the cease-fire was “a grave surrender to terrorism and the dictates of Hamas.”

The cease-fire comes at a sensitive time for Netanyahu. In the wake of an inconclusive election in March, Netanyahu failed to form a majority coalition in parliament. His opponents now have until June 2 to form an alternative government of their own.

The war greatly complicated the efforts of his opponents, who include both Jewish and Arab parties and were forced to suspend their negotiations in such a fraught environment. But the inconclusive outcome of the war could give them renewed momentum to restart those talks.

Meanwhile in Gaza, a Hamas spokesman, Abdelatif al-Qanou, said Israel’s announcement was a “declaration of defeat.” Nonetheless, the group said it would honor the deal, which was to officially go into effect at 2 a.m.

Ali Barakeh, an official with Islamic Jihad, a smaller group that fought alongside Hamas, said Israel’s declaration of a truce was a defeat for Netanyahu and “a victory to the Palestinian people.”

Despite the claims, both groups appeared to have suffered significant losses in the fighting. Hamas and Islamic Jihad said at least 20 of their fighters were killed, while Israel said the number was at least 130 and probably higher.

Some 58,000 Palestinians fled their homes, many of them seeking shelter in crowded United Nations schools at a time of a coronavirus outbreak.

Since the fighting began, Gaza’s infrastructure, already weakened by a 14-year blockade, has rapidly deteriorated.

Medical supplies, water and fuel for electricity are running low in the territory, on which Israel and Egypt imposed the blockade after Hamas seized power from the Palestinian Authority in 2007. Since then, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has governed autonomous areas of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and has limited influence in Gaza.

Israeli attacks have also damaged at least 18 hospitals and clinics and destroyed one health facility, the World Health Organization said. Nearly half of all essential drugs have run out.

Israeli bombing has damaged over 50 schools across the territory, according to advocacy group Save the Children, destroying at least six. While repairs are done, education will be disrupted for nearly 42,000 children.

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Stuart News

Friday, May 21, 2021

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Martin County Local Planning Agency will conduct public hearings on June 3, 2021, beginning at 7:00 P.M., or as soon thereafter as the items may be heard, to review the following items.

The Board of County Commissioners of Martin County will conduct public hearings on June 22, 2021, beginning at 9:00 A.M., or as soon thereafter as the items may be heard, to review the following items.

1. AN ORDINANCE OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA, REGARDING EXCAVATING, FILLING, AND MINING; AMENDING ARTICLE 4, SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS; DIVISION 8, EXCAVATION, FILLING AND MINING; DIVISION 1, WETLANDS AND SHORELINE PROTECTION; AND DIVISION 9, STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE; AMENDING ARTICLE 5, ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITY STANDARDS, DIVISION 2, ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES, LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE; AND AMENDING ARTICLE 10, DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCEDURES, LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE; PROVIDING FOR APPLICABILITY, CONFLICTING PROVISIONS, SEVERABILITY, FILING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, CODIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

2. AN ORDINANCE OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA, REGARDING MINING STANDARDS; AMENDING ARTICLE 4, SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, DIVISION 8, EXCAVATION, FILLING AND MINING BY CREATING SECTION 4.348, MINING STANDARDS FOR MINING OPERATIONS; LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE; PROVIDING FOR APPLICABILITY, CONFLICTING PROVISIONS, SEVERABILITY, FILING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, CODIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

All interested persons are invited to attend and be heard. The hearings will be held in the Commission Chambers on the first floor of the Martin County Administrative Center, 2401 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart, Florida. Written comments may be mailed to James Gorton, Public Works Director, 2401 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart, Florida 34996. Copies of the items will be available from the Public Works Department. For more information, contact Lisa Wichser, County Engineer, Public Works Department, at 772-223-7945.

Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding are entitled, at no cost, to the provision of certain assistance. This does not include transportation to and from the meeting. Please contact the Office of the ADA Coordinator at (772) 320-3131, or the Office of the County Administrator at (772) 288-5400, or in writing to 2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, FL, 34996, no later than three days before the hearing date. Persons using a TTY device, please call 711 Florida Relay Services.

If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at the meetings or hearings of any board, committee, agency, council, or advisory group, that person will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose, may need to insure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record should include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

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